

Fact Sheet



State Budget Cuts and King County's Primary Care Safety Net

Reductions will harm King County's poorest residents

Proposed state budget cuts will decimate King County's safety net and disproportionately impact the poorest and most vulnerable residents, including pregnant women and low-income working adults. These cuts will result in more illness and death, and actually cost taxpayers more in the long-run by increasing expensive emergency room visits and intensive hospital stays.

- ◆ **Reductions to community and public health centers.** Plans to drastically reduce Medicaid payments to Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) will severely impact community and public health centers' ability to provide primary and preventive care for the poorest residents of King County. King County community and public health centers provide care for individuals regardless of their ability to pay at more than 30 clinics across King County. This reduction will force health centers to cut services and some clinics may close.

The state also has reduced **Community Health Services grants**, which are the state's only commitment to help community health centers care for the growing number of uninsured.

- ◆ **Elimination and reduction of health services for more than 50,000 low-income women.**

- ◊ **Maternity Support Services - 36,000 clients in King County**

MSS supplements prenatal care, helping prevent low birth weights in King County. Beyond expensive hospitalizations at birth, low-birth weights often have life-long implications, including disabilities and

- ◊ **State Family Planning Grants - 15,000 clients in King County**

State family planning grants are the only source of funding to provide family planning and STD services for more than 9,000 uninsured women in King County. This cut will disproportionately impact women of color and will result in hundreds of unintended pregnancies each year at a cost of \$8,675 per Medicaid birth for the state.

- ◊ **Breast and Cervical Health Program - 1200 clients in King County**

The governor's proposed supplemental budget suspends the program for the remainder of the biennium, which means uninsured and underinsured women across King, Kitsap, Jefferson and Clallam counties will lose access to life-saving screenings for breast and cervical cancer.

Key Facts

- ◆ More than \$700 million in state cuts—including more than \$50 million in direct cuts to Public Health—Seattle & King County—will dismantle the safety net and jeopardize care for the most vulnerable residents.
- ◆ Those affected are most likely to be poor, female and from communities of color.
- ◆ The lack of a safety net will cost us all more, through more expensive emergency room and hospital visits, the need for more jail health services, and untreated illnesses.
- ◆ Before cutting services for those who need them the most, the state should first explore innovations in its health care spending.

problems in school.

- ◆ **Dental Services.**
 - ◊ **Medicaid Adult Dental - 31,000 clients in King County**
Dental care is an essential component of overall health care. If Medicaid dental is cut for adults, thousands of patients in King County will have no where to go for acute dental problems except costly hospital emergency rooms.
- ◆ **Reductions in Health Coverage.**
The proposed budgets eliminate the only affordable insurance options for more than 20,000 low-income working or disabled adults and 8,000 children in King County. If the proposed cuts are enacted, the number of uninsured in Washington state will grow to more than one million.
 - ◊ **Basic Health - 14,000 clients in King County**
Each person who loses Basic Health coverage will likely become uninsured, which will put incredible stress on our health care system by overwhelming community and public health centers, as well as hospital emergency rooms.
 - ◊ **Disability Lifeline - 6,300 clients in King County**
Without Disability Lifeline—a program for adults who are temporarily physically or mentally disabled—clients will veer off the road to recovery and many will end up homeless or incarcerated.
 - ◊ **Children's Health Program - 8,100 clients in King County**
Covering children is cost effective. Though they're usually healthy, children still need regular check-ups, developmental screenings and vaccinations to make sure they stay healthy and ready to learn. Children's Health Program pays for those preventative measures so that short childhood illnesses don't develop into costly, lifelong health problems. One hospital stay for an asthma attack costs an average of \$3,000 – nearly two years' worth of coverage under Apple Health for Kids.

Solutions

Budget reductions are inevitable in this unprecedented crisis. We are committed to working with the state to find the most innovative, efficient and cost-effective ways to invest its health care dollars. Cutting primary care and preventive health care services for those who need them the most is not the answer. The Governor's Advisory Work Group has put forth a number of recommendations, including:

- ◆ Implementing a "generics first" prescription policy for Medicaid
- ◆ Restricting payments for services that should not occur, such as preventable hospital readmissions
- ◆ Reducing the use of overused services, such as imaging and cesarean sections.

These and additional recommendations can be found in the "Report from Governor's Workgroup on Health Care Reform," submitted November 12, 2010, by the Puget Sound Health Alliance (www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/documents/RecommendationsNovember2010_000.pdf).